

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01

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AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

AMEMBASSY BONN

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

USMISSION IAEA VIENNA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PARIS

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AMEMBASSY TOKYO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 CANBERRA 0535

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, ETRD, TECH, AS

SUBJECT: WHITLAM TRIP TO EUROPE

1. FOLLOWING PRIMIN WHITLAM'S RETURN JANUARY 21 FROM 5-WEEK TRIP MAINLY TO EUROPEAN CAPITALS, I HAVE HAD OCCASION TO DISCUSS HIS TRIP SEPARATELY WITH DOUGLAS MCKAY (SECRETARY, DEPARTMENT OF OVERSEAS TRADE) AND RICHARD WOOLCOTT (DEPUTY SECRETARY OF DFA), WHO ACCOMPANIED WHITLAM ON HIS ODYSSEY. THEY BOTH FELT THAT, DESPITE WIDESPREAD AUSTRALIAN CRITICISM OF WHITLAM FOR BEING ABSENT FROM COUNTRY DURING DAYS OF DEEPENING ECONOMIC CRISIS, TRIP WAS MOST WORTHWHILE IN TERMS OF AUSTRALIA'S ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL INTERESTS AND AS AN EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE FOR ALL

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CONCERNED. MCKAY SAID THAT PRIMIN WOULD HAVE BEEN WELL

ADVISED TO OMIT HIS EUROPEAN SIGHTSEEING, AND BOTH HE AND WOOLCOTT REGRETTED WHITLAM'S OCCASIONAL SELF-INFLICTED WOUNDS AT PRESS CONFERENCES, SUCH AS HIS UNFORTUNATE REMARKS ABOUT THE HOBART, TASMANIA BRIDGE DISASTER. WOOLCOTT REGRETTED TIMING OF THE TRIP, WHICH WAS ORIGINALLY SCHEDULED FOR LAST MAY BUT HAD TO BE POSTPONED BECAUSE OF DOUBLE DISSOLUTION AND SUBSEQUENT ELECTIONS. WOOLCOTT FELT THAT PRIMIN'S BRIEF RADIO AND TV STATEMENT JANUARY 22 WAS TOO SUMMARY, DEFENSIVE AND LACKING IN THE GRAND STYLE OF WHITLAM'S PREVIOUS SPEECHWRITER FREUDENBERG. WOOLCOTT POINTED OUT THAT PRIMIN WILL SOON BE MAKING LENGTHY STATEMENT TO PARLIAMENT ON HIS TRIP, AND HE WILL CERTAINLY BE ON THE DEFENSIVE AT UPCOMING LABOR PARTY'S BIENNIAL CONFERENCE JUSTIFYING HIS ABSENCE FROM AUSTRALIA AT CRUCIAL TIME.

2. AS TO SUBSTANCE OF PRIMIN'S MEETINGS WITH EUROPEAN AND OTHER LEADERS, THESE HAVE BEEN WELL COVERED BY OUR POSTS. THE FOLLOWING ARE COMMENTS MADE BY MCKAY OR WOOLCOTT THAT THROW ADDITIONAL LIGHT ON VARIOUS POINTS CONNECTED WITH PRIMIN'S VISITS:

3. MCKAY WAS MOST IMPRESSED BY CONVERSATIONS HELD IN MOSCOW. HE DESCRIBED KOSYGIN AS AN "ENORMOUS PERSONALITY" WHO WAS AT PAINS TO STRESS CONTINUING SOVIET DEDICATION TO DETENTE. HE AND OTHER SOVIET LEADERS WERE CLEARLY EXERCISED OVER SENATOR JACKSON'S ACTIVITIES BUT GAVE NO INDICATION OF THIS ADVERSELY AFFECTING ATTITUDES IN OTHER AREAS OF US-USSR RELATIONSHIPS. IN FACT, KOSYGIN ENTHUSIASTICALLY DESCRIBED CERTAIN ONGOING JOINT PROJECTS WITH US FIRMS. MCKAY FELT THAT SOVIET DESIRE TO BROADEN AND DEEPEN SOVIET-AUSTRALIAN TRADING RELATIONSHIPS WAS DUE IN PART TO SOVIET CONCERN OVER IMPROVED AUSTRALIAN-CHINESE TRADE RELATIONSHIPS. SOVIETS DISPLAYED WELL-KNOWN LACK OF UNDERSTANDING OF NEED TO SELL VIGOROUSLY IN A FREE MARKET, ALTHOUGH THEY SEEM TO BE ON POINT OF LEARNING.

4. AS TO MEETINGS IN WEST GERMANY, MCKAY SAID AUSTRALIAN GROUP WAS IMMEDIATELY CONFRONTED ON ARRIVAL BY REPRESENTATIVES OF GERMAN FEDERATION OF MANUFACTURERS WHO PROCEEDED CONFIDENTIAL

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TO BERATE AUSTRALIANS WITH A VARIETY OF COMPLAINTS ABOUT AUSTRALIAN TRADE POLICIES, INCLUDING RESOURCE POLICIES, AUTOMOBILE TARIFFS, INVESTMENT POLICIES AND EVEN ON AUSTRALIA'S ROLE IN INTERNATIONAL BAUXITE ASSOCIATION AND OTHER PRODUCER ORGANIZATIONS WHERE AUSTRALIA HAS PLAYED IN FACT A USEFUL AND RESPONSIBLE ROLE FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF COUNTRIES LIKE WEST GERMANY. MCKAY WAS NOT IMPRESSED BY THE PERSONALITIES AND ATTITUDES OF SOME OF THE GERMAN

LEADERS WHOM WHITLAM'S PARTY ENCOUNTERED, INCLUDING SCHMIDT. MCKAY FAULTED WEST EUROPEAN LEADERS GENERALLY FOR LACKING THE BROADER VISION OF AMERICAN LEADERS.

5. MCKAY SAID THAT, IN DISCUSSING SUBJECTS OF BEEF AND URANIUM, EUROPEANS ALMOST INVARIABLY FIRST APOLOGIZED FOR PRESENT INABILITY TO TAKE AUSTRALIAN BEEF AND THEN EXPRESSED STRONG INTEREST IN BUYING RAW URANIUM. AS TO THE LIKELIHOOD THAT THE EUROPEAN BEEF MARKET WOULD REOPEN, MCKAY SAID HE DID NOT SEE IT DOING SO FOR A LONG TIME ALTHOUGH EUROPEANS MAY EVENTUALLY MOVE TO A SYSTEM OF VOLUNTARY RESTRAINTS SIMILAR TO THAT OF THE UNITED STATES. ON THE SUBJECT OF URANIUM, MCKAY SAID HE THOUGHT THE EUROPEANS FINALLY CAME TO UNDERSTAND THAT AUSTRALIA WOULD ONLY SELL IN ENRICHED FORM IN EXCHANGE FOR TECHNOLOGY (WHICH EUROPEANS NOT ANXIOUS TO PART WITH) AND CAPITAL. HE SAID NO UNDERSTANDINGS WERE REACHED BUT EUROPEANS WERE "THINKING IT OVER" AND WOULD PROBABLY MOVE FAST AND WOULD BE WILLING TO "PAY PRICE IF NECESSARY". HE SAID NO ONE WAS EXCLUDED FROM COOPERATIVE PROJECTS, INCLUDING THE JAPANESE OR AMERICANS, BUT EVENTUAL DEALS WOULD BE ON AUSTRALIAN TERMS. MCKAY CONCEDED THAT, "IN THE BACKS OF OUR MINDS", AUSTRALIANS SAW A LINKAGE BETWEEN BEEF AND URANIUM. HE ALSO STRESSED SOMEWHAT RUEFULLY UNQUESTIONED PRIMACY OF MINISTER FOR MINERALS AND ENERGY CONNOR ON URANIUM.

6. AS TO WHITLAM'S REMARKS TO EUROPEAN PRESS LUMPING U.S. WITH THE EEC AND JAPAN ON QUESTION OF CLOSING OF BEEF MARKETS, MCKAY READILY AGREED THAT THIS HAD BEEN UNFAIR TO THE U.S. AND CONFIDED THAT IT WAS ENTIRELY CONTRARY TO BRIEFING HE PERSONALLY HAD GIVEN PRIMIN. MCKAY SAID THAT, THOUGH HE DID NOT NECESSARILY AGREE WITH U.S. ACTION, HE

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HAD TRIED TO "EDUCATE" THE PRIMIN ON CONSIDERABLE DIFFERENCE IN APPROACHES TO PROBLEM BY THE U.S. ON THE ONE HAND AND THE EEC AND JAPAN ON THE OTHER. (COMMENT: THIS IS ANOTHER INSTANCE OF THE WAY AUSTRALIANS LIKE TO "CUT DOWN THE TALL POPPY", TO USE THEIR FAVORITE PHRASE. JUST AS WHITLAM OCCASIONALLY LIKES TO CUT DOWN THE TALLEST INTERNATIONAL POPPY - THE UNITED STATES - SO DO HIS OWN COUNTRYMEN LIKE TO CUT DOWN AUSTRALIA'S TALLEST POPPY - PRIME MINISTER WHITLAM - AS WELL THE TALLEST MOMMY, - HIS WIFE.)

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7. BOTH MCKAY AND WOOLCOTT FELT THAT SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES OF VIEWPOINT REMAIN BETWEEN WHITLAM, FOREIGN MINISTRY AND DEPT. OF OVERSEAS TRADE, ON THE ONE HAND, AND THE POWERFUL REX CONNOR, MINISTER OF MINERALS AND ENERGY AND HIS DEPUTY, SIR LENNOX HEWITT, WHO ACCOMPANIED THE PRIMIN, ON THE OTHER HAND. AS WOOLCOTT PUT IT, THESE DIFFERENCES RELATE TO THREE SIGNIFICANT AREAS: (1) FOREIGN INVESTMENT, WHERE WHITLAM POSITION LESS RESTRICTIVE THAN CONNORS) (2) AUSTRALIA'S PARTICIPATION IN THE PROPOSED INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES ON OIL, AND (3) RATIFICATION OF THE NPT AS A REQUIREMENT FOR ACCESS TO AUSTRALIAN URANIUM, A REQUIREMENT WHICH THE PRIMIN INSISTS UPON. THE DEPARTMENTS OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND OVERSEAS TRADE HAD EARLIER RECOMMENDED AUSTRALIA'S PARTICIPATION

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IN THE INTERNATIONAL ENERGY AGENCY, A POSITION STRONGLY OPPOSED BY CONNOR AND HEWITT WHO RECOMMENDED THAT AUSTRALIA NOT ONLY STAND ALOOF FROM IEA BUT NOT EVEN PARTICIPATE IN THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES ON OIL. THE PRIMIN HAS NOW DECIDED AGAINST SEEKING IEA MEMBERSHIP BUT DEFINITELY FAVORS AUSTRALIA'S ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN THE PROPOSED OIL CONFERENCES. WOOLCOTT MENTIONED THAT THE PRIMIN DID IMPRESS UPON FRENCH PRESIDENT GISCARD D'ESTAING HIS STRONG CONCERNS ABOUT NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION AND THAT GISCARD VOUCHSAFED THAT FRANCE WOULD PARTICIPATE IN THE NPT REVIEW SEVERAL MONTHS HENCE. (COMMENT: NO REPORT WAS MADE BY THE PRIMIN OF THIS CONVERSATION WITH GISCARD AND FOREGOING IS ACCORDINGLY SENSITIVE. (PROTECT.)

8. ACCORDING TO WOOLCOTT, WHEN WHITLAM SOUGHT INCLUSION IN FINAL SOVIET-AUSTRALIAN COMMUNIQUE OF REFERENCE TO HIS URGING THAT MOSCOW AND WASHINGTON AGREE ON REDUCING MILITARY PRESENCE IN THE INDIAN OCEAN, THE SOVIETS COUNTERED BY SUBMITTING A REDRAFT OF THIS PORTION OF THE COMMUNIQUE IN WHICH REFERENCE WAS MADE TO THE JOINT US-AUSTRALIAN NORTHWEST CAPE COMMUNICATIONS FACILITIES AS ONE OF THE INDIAN OCEAN BASES. WHITLAM DECIDED TO DROP THE ENTIRE SUBJECT IN THE COMMUNIQUE.
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